

## A New Chapter

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By Kay

DIARY ENTRY OF AXIMILI-ESGARROUTH-ISTHIL:

My name is Aximili-Esgarrouth-Isthil.

It's been a year since the final battle of the Animorphs. A year since the humans I had come to think of as friends were killed in trying to save their people. A year since my best friend, my shorm, and my nephew, Tobais, died in my hands. A year... and I still have nightmares. I still hear the screams... see the blood... Tobias's eyes as the life in them died...

I always thought that in the end, after it was all over, that I'd return to the Andalites. Back home, with my own people. Even up to the last battle, that had always been my intention. But things change. People change.

I changed.

You cannot go through the horror I have, and not be forever changed. You cannot go back to "normal" after you've done the things I've done, and seen the things I've seen. After that, "normal" is the dreamworld, and the world in your head, where you constantly relive all the events and moments that altered your life irrevocably- that is reality.

Thus, in the end, after all the bloodshed and tears, I stayed. I only took a few minutes to contact Lirem, an Andalite on the Council, and tell him of the victory over the Yeerks. After that, I never spoke to one of my own people again. My own people, or who I thought had been

my people, were forgotten. I never thought once about my parents. It just did not matter anymore. I could never return, not after all that has happened to me in those years where I fought with the Animorphs.

And so, I stayed with the Chee, the only other people I knew on the planet who would have reason to let me stay with them. EreK was kind enough to offer me a small bedroom in their underground structure where they kept their dogs. The bedroom was small, but comfortable, and I had quickly moved in and made it home. I think EreK was guilty he hadn't had the power to save the others. That he didn't intervene. Sometimes, I'm angry at the Chee for this reason... other times, I understand, and don't blame them. Once in a while, if I'm feeling compassionate, I am glad that they were spared the pain of battle and death.

As soon as the war was over, people ran free. The Yeerks had been defeated. Controllers were roaming the streets, joyfully proclaiming their freedom to all. Families cried, and were brought back together. People spread the truth, until everyone knew about the Yeerk Invasion- how they were using the Sharing to infest people, and how a small group of "Andalite Bandits" saved the world, and gave their lives for freedom. No one knew the truth, of course. No one even guessed that the saviors of Earth were five incredibly brave human children. Only Prince Jake, Cassie, Marco, and Rachel's families knew the truth. EreK and I had agreed that it would be the best thing if we told them the whole truth. I remember that day. It's imprinted in my mind forever...

Tom, Jake's older brother, had been freed. It was the first time I'd seen Prince Jake's brother without a Yeerk controlling him. I can still remember the horror and pain that spread upon his face when he learned his brother's true identity and his fate.

I can remember with painful clarity how Rachel's younger sisters had sobbed bitterly, and how Cassie's father had sat, numb with shock. Eva, Marco's mother, was the only one who appeared at peace. Marco had freed her, in his last moments of life. He'd given up his own to save hers, and I can still remember the look of infinite sadness on her face. She did not cry or scream, but only sat in mute despair. Somehow, though, I thought that some part of her seemed at peace now.

I felt guilt like never before that day. Over and over, I asked myself why I hadn't died with them. Why hadn't I perished as well? Why was I the only one left behind? I had wanted to save them... wished I had saved them... but I couldn't. I knew it was ridiculous, but I felt like it was all my fault, and that they had left me behind. It hurt, every waking moment, and the pain simply refused to go away. It was like a dull ache in my chest that had settled there for life.

Prince Jake... It's been so long since I remembered him. He died trying to protect Cassie, but he died in vain. She was killed anyway by a stray shot from a Dracon Beam. Rachel had been killed not by Controllers, but by her own hand when they had tried to make one. And Marco... funny, sarcastic Marco had taken the hit of a Dracon Beam meant to kill his mother.

Tobais...

Tobais had morphed to human, because his hawk form was seriously injured. I remember how he saw Rachel's dead body, and cried, kneeling beside her and cradling her limp, lifeless form in his arms. He'd been in mid-morph, trying to reclaim his wings- but a nearby Hork-Bajr had shot him with a Dracon Beam before he could start to change. I remember, the very first thing that changed was the feather patterns on his arms. But then, the shot came, and he collapsed. The burn was in the middle of his back, and I knew it was fatal before I reached him. But he was still alive, still gasping for air. I will never forget the shine in his eyes, or how he squeezed my hand, and smiled painfully at me. His blue eyes filled with tears, and in one second, my shorm, my nephew, and the person who'd been like a brother to me was taken away forever. The only comfort I had were the feather patterns on his arms... Even in death, he had his wings. But he was gone, never to fly with them again. The light went out, and I never... never...

I am becoming too emotional. Tears are slipping down my face, and the words I am writing are blurry from them. I am crying now, and I cannot allow myself to do that. I must finish this. I have to tell the story, so that someday at least, someone will know. And I feel the need to somehow expel all my guilt and anger. Perhaps... perhaps this is the way to do that.

In the end, the Yeerks were all killed by a chemical that we'd let loose down in the Yeerk Pool Kandrona Rays. It had been Marco's idea, actually. We asked Erek if the Yeerks had any chemical weaknesses. We found out that if they were subjected to Kandrona Rays that had any Hydrogen and Argon mixed in, they would shrivel up and instantly their systems would be poisoned. They would die. Cassie had argued vehemently against it- it was slaughter, she claimed. Part of me agreed with her. But by that time, we were desperate, and in the end we had taken advantage of it. There was only one slight complication- we didn't know where the new Kandrona was located.

I apologize, I had to stop. It simply hurt too much, and the memories were coming so quickly...

We did not know where the new Kandrona was located, so we decided to take the Hydrogen/Argon mixture directly to the Yeerk Pool. In the end, we succeeded in our mission... but at what price? Only one survived, and made it out of that hell, to tell the tale- me. And I can never be proud of that. It was the worst day of my life.

It was, in truth, the last day of my life.

I cannot express the pain I felt after that battle. Tobais, the only family I knew save my parents, was gone. My Prince, my friends... they had all died, and now I had no choice but to carry on. Tobais himself had died in my arms, and I had never told him how much he meant to me. Our conversations kept me sane, and made the loneliness less painful. I had thought of him like a brother. He took some of the pain of Elfangor's death away. He was family.

And I had lost him. It still hurts, and I think it always will.

As I said, it was the last day of my life.

It was also the beginning of my new one.

After the battle, I did not wish to go home to glory. It no longer meant anything to me. I wanted nothing to do with death any longer- except, perhaps, to die myself, to curl up somewhere and let the life slowly seep out of me. But I could not do that. In the end, I made the ultimate sacrifice, I suppose. It does not seem like much of a sacrifice now- I only did it because I was numb with disbelief, and half-mad with grief. I had wanted nothing more than to forget the past.

I morphed my human form, and waited for two hours. After the limit had passed, I simply stood and walked silently to Ereks house, and asked him if I could stay with the Chee. He was horrified and amazed that I had become a nothlit, but he told me that I was always welcome. So, I moved in with the android canines.

In reality, it was not a bad life- in fact, I enjoy living here now. I help take care of the Chee's many dogs, and I'm currently considering going to high school. I took on the name "Alex Isthil." It works, and I can still use "Ax" as a shortened form.

It is ironic, I suppose. I always wanted to be like Elfangor, and now I have become a human nothlit and changed my name, just as he did. I finally understand why Elfangor did it, and I accept it with all my heart.

I believe I am approximately 15 or 16 in human years. I took a birthday, and Ereks created a birth certificate under my name, and also created papers that claim I am Mr.Kings adopted son. I have a cover, and no one but the families of the Animorphs, and the Chee know who I really am...

Just a moment. Tobi is indicating that she would like to be fed.

Ah, I haven't told you about my saving grace, have I not?

Tobi is the only thing that kept me from becoming suicidal. The day I recieved her, I was reading in my new room, and Ereks ran in, a hologram-less figure of silver and ivory metal.

He told me to come see Jenny giving birth to her puppies. Jenny was a stunning golden retriever, who had been pregnant for a while. I reluctantly got up and went to see. More out of curiosity, than wanting to, though. Jenny had looked so proud of her four small, wiggling, blonde puppies, but Ereks had pointed out in sadness that the smallest one, (the runt I believe she was called), would not last long without someone to take care of it. Everyone was too busy, he claimed, but I believe now that he simply wanted to give me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. He asked me if I would care for it. I agreed only to repay their kindness, but now I know it was the best thing that could have happened to me.

The small pup had messy, blond hair that never seemed to stay where it should, and bright blue eyes. It hurt, because even if it was a dog, it reminded me of Tobias. I tried to ignore it when I could. Fortunatly, for both of us, that did not work out. I nursed her back to health and she finally forced me to name her. I recall exactly how I was feeling then- it was not one of my good days. All I wanted to do was sleep. This was fine with the puppy until about noon, when it

became annoyed with its lack of food. It sat at the foot of my bed and yipped constantly, becoming louder each time I yelled at it. Even the puppy's dreamy and yet stubbornly proud manner reminded me of Tobias.

In the end, the puppy won. I dragged myself out of bed, and as I fed it, I glared at it, and declared to all the Chee that from there on, the blasted mutt would be called "Tobi."

But eventually I fell in love with Tobi. Her nature was one I could not push away, and even though I was unable to claim her as my own, all the Chee knew without words that Tobi loved me most of all. They would smile at me, and I knew that they thought it was wonderful. That did not matter to me, though. What mattered was that as long as Tobi was there, I was at peace enough to live, and not just to exist. I was strong enough to face the past, and, after a long time, to visit my friend's graves...

It was unspeakably difficult to see the harsh truth carved on that cold gray stone. What did the stone tell about my friends? Only the dates, the names were etched onto its surface. Nothing of the bravery and meaning of their lives. Alone among rows of the same cold, silent stones, not special at all. But to me, they were the only thing left of my friends, or my world of sunshine and laughter. That world left the day they left me, but was slowly coming out again. It gave me a fierce, painful longing and anguish to see the undeniable result of the war. But I survived, and in the end, I prevailed. Yes, they were gone, and I could no longer see them. But someday, perhaps we would be again. Perhaps someday I would see Elfangor, Tobias, and Cassie and the others again.

The visits from Toby Hamee helped too. She was very sympathetic, and we became close friends. She became my shorm, and we helped each other out through the numb tragedy of the Animorph's deaths. She and the other Tobi got along quite well also. Whenever she came to visit, Tobi would come running out to greet the Hork-Bajr. Together, we grieved, and we laughed, and we moved on while still attempting to hold on to the memories. It hurt, but we knew that we couldn't mourn forever.

I still hurt, and I think I always will. But I hope that in the end I will find a reason for living after all, that it was not simply a freak accident. I hope that I will be able to live out my life, and never take it for granted, and maybe even have a family one day. A family, with a son and a loving wife. Perhaps even a son who inherits the blue, dreamy eyes of a very close friend of mine...

Until then, though, I will just live life one day at a time, and take the pain one memory after another. I will suffer through the nightmares as they come, over and over each night, and try to remember the good things.

And I'll laugh when I can find the strength. I'll smile when I feel a moment of joy. I'll cry, but they will be happy tears for another day.

I'll live on. I owe them that much.

I'll never forget them, and if they taught me anything, it is that one must do all the living one can. That is what I plan to do. "Milk

life all it's worth", as EreK says. Perhaps one day, I will work up enough courage to go see Marco's mother, and tell her how much he loved her. Maybe I will be capable of going to see Cassie's parents, and help them out with their animals in the barn. Perhaps I will go play a game of "basketball" with Tom, and tell him of the many times Jake had bragged about how great he was. Maybe I will baby-sit Rachel's little sisters, or at least tell them of the adventures she had while she lived. Maybe... Maybe...

Until that time comes, I'll be living though. Getting by one day at a time. This entry, this confession and document, is the last I will make as Aximili-Esgarrouth-Isthil. This is my last confession, and my last story to tell. I can never forget it, but I will move on. I will hold the memories to my heart, but I will laugh again, and do everything I can to make life worth living.

This is a new beginning for me... A new chapter in my life... I want to end my old life with something I learned: Hope is always alive. Don't allow it to slip away. Ever.

My name is Alex Isthil...

~~~~~ THE END:  
Questions? Comments? Insults? Death threats? Bricks? I'll take 'em...  
This one really sucks, but what can you expect from a girl writing  
fanfiction at 2 or 3 in the morning, half awake? :)

End  
file.